

PRESS RELEASE



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EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

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U.S. Visas: FY 2011 Highlights

In fiscal year 2011 the United States welcomed more than 60 million international visitors for business, tourism, study or temporary work. These visitors add greatly to our nation's cultural, educational, and economic life.

Preliminary numbers indicate that consular officers processed more than 9.6 million visa applications in fiscal year 2011. Of those, more than 7.5 million applicants were qualified to receive U.S. visas, an increase of more than 17 percent over the previous fiscal year when 6.4 million visas were issued. In fiscal year 2011 in Trinidad and Tobago, four out of five applicants travelling to the U.S. for tourism or to conduct business were qualified for a visa.

We have seen tremendous increases in demand for visas in some of the world's fastest-growing economies. During the past five years, visa issuances have increased 234 percent in Brazil, 124 percent in China, 51 percent in India, and 24 percent in Mexico. In fiscal year 2011, consular officers processed more than one million visas in China, an increase of more than 35 percent over last year.

There were 723,277 foreign students in the U.S. in the 2010-2011 academic year—the highest number ever (Institute of International Education).

The goals of our visa process are to facilitate legitimate travel to the U.S. while ensuring that applicants are both qualified for the visa and do not pose a security risk to the U.S. The Department of State is dedicated to the protection of our borders, and has no higher priority than

the safety of our citizens. In addition, we are committed to providing prompt and courteous service.

All U.S. embassies and consulates have procedures to expedite applications for business travelers, students, and applicants needing urgent medical treatment or facing other emergencies. Around the world at 222 visa-issuing embassies and consulates, a highly trained corps of consular officers and support staff adjudicate millions of visa applications each year.

Every visa application is assessed on an individual basis in accordance with U.S. law. U.S. Embassy officials do not discriminate against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of race, color, gender, age, religion, creed, disability, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, U.S. government officials regularly receive training to ensure compliance with our anti-discrimination laws.

Due to U.S. laws protecting the privacy of individuals, we cannot comment on individual visa cases. Each applicant who is not qualified for a visa is given written justification.

The Department of State establishes a Schedule of Fees for official consular services to ensure the Department recovers the costs of providing these services. The Department periodically reviews the Schedule to ensure that the fees are sufficient to recover processing costs. These costs are incurred whether or not the visa is granted; thus, refunds are not given to applicants who fail to qualify for a visa. The most recent revision in fees occurred in summer 2010.

Additional information on visa statistics and on how to apply for a U.S. visa is available on travel.state.gov or trinidad.usembassy.gov

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